

# Posture Improvement Exercises

## Improving the Forward Head Posture

It has been well established the the most common deficient posture profile is that of Forward Head Posture (FHP). This occurs when the center of the ear is forward the center of the shoulder.

When this happens, the center of balance of the body is thrown off and the body begins to distort in an effort to re-correct the Center of Gravity. As the head goes forward, the upper body drifts backward and the hips tilt forward.

This can lead to abnormal stresses on muscles, joints, and ligaments, and ultimately lead to abnormal spinal biomechanics.

By recognizing FHP early, and applying specific posture improvement exercises, it is possible to greatly reduce the amount of FHP, and in may cases, bring the posture back to neutral.

The following exercises have been recommended to reduce your Forward Head Posture. Please follow the directions for each maneuver closely. Consult your doctor should you have any questions.

## General Stretching and Exercise Rules

- If any exercise or stretch causes pain, stop immediately. If pain persists contact your doctor.
- Don't "bounce" or perform jerky movements. The exercise or stretch should consist of slow, smooth movements
- Hold each movement for 10-15 seconds, then relax and "shake out" for a few seconds.
- Perform the exercises and stretches every day. 1-6 on one day and 7-12 on the next.

# #1 Elbow Lift Behind the Back



*Position 1*



*Position 2*



*From the back*

Clasp your hands behind your back. Take a deep breath and raise your arms as high as possible behind you, as you try to squeeze your elbows together. Push your chest up and out toward the ceiling.

After about 10-15 seconds, breath and pull back against your hands for about 5 seconds. Squeeze elbows together for about 10-15 seconds then relax and shake out. Repeat until you reach your flexibility limit.

# #2 Stomach Crunches & Stretches



Cradle Head/  
Neck with Fore-  
arms



Make sure you stretch out by fully reaching out to the other side of the room with your arms and legs. This stretching will help prevent the stomach muscles from retaining soreness after the exercise.

Lie on floor with legs bent to flatten the lower back to the floor.

First lift shoulders, then upper back off the floor. Keep lower back on the ground.

Think of the motion as a curl-up. This will result in a progressive contraction of the stomach muscles. Lead with your chest, keeping the head over and not in front of the shoulders. Don't put hands behind the neck. Use an arm position as noted in the exercise illustration, hands on shoulders.

Try to use forearms to support the head.

Start with ten repetitions and gradually overtime, build to 100 reps.

# #3 Side of Chest and Outer Back Stretch



Place one hand over head, bend at the elbow.

Reach behind your head with the other hand.

Grab your elbow and pull your overhead arm behind your head. Keep head and chest up as high as possible.

Lean into the stretch for greater effect.

After 10-15 seconds, pull back with your overhead arm for about 5 seconds.

Relax and repeat. Shake off, and repeat on the other side.

The goal is to perform this stretch without having to duck your head forward to clear your arm.

# #4 Neck Stretching



**Take this stretch easy the first few times you do it.**

**Lie on the floor, lift your head off the ground and turn your head to one side. Use the hand opposite the turn, to gently push your head to as close to 90 degrees as possible. Hold for 10-15 seconds, then push back against your head for about 5 seconds.**

**Then relax and repeat. Continue this process on the opposite side. Continue to do this maneuver until you have reached maximum travel on both sides.**

**If this maneuver is too difficult for you while laying on the floor, you may also do this maneuver while seated. Make sure your head is centered over your shoulders.**

# #5 Chin Glides



**Stand straight with shoulders back and down.**

**Stare straight ahead to help keep head and chin level.**

**Push your head straight back as far as you can go. Hold for 3-5 seconds.**

**Repeat 10 times.**

**DO NOT allow the head return to go forward past neutral, as noted in the illustrations. Do not elevate head, chin or shoulders.**

# #6 Shoulder Rolls & Cross Chest Arm Rolls



Starting in a standing or sitting position, start with your arms at your side, eyes forward. Roll your shoulders up a little, then back and down. Hold the back and down position for 3-5 seconds. Relax and repeat 5-10 times.

Next, place one arm horizontally across your chest. Stretch that arm by pulling across with your other arm, pulling with wrist behind the elbow to minimize the stress on your hands and fingers.

Let your body twist in the direction of the pull. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Relax and repeat 1-2 times. Repeat on other side.



# #7 Elbow Press Behind The Back



Bend your arms back to 45 degrees.

Keep your shoulders down and back, and your head up.

Your partner should push your elbows inward, trying to touch the elbows together, as close as possible. Hold for 10-15 seconds. Then push against your partner's hands for about 5 seconds.

Relax so partner can stretch for another 10-15 seconds.

Shake out and relax for 5-10 seconds.



# #8 Stomach Strengthenener & Stretcher

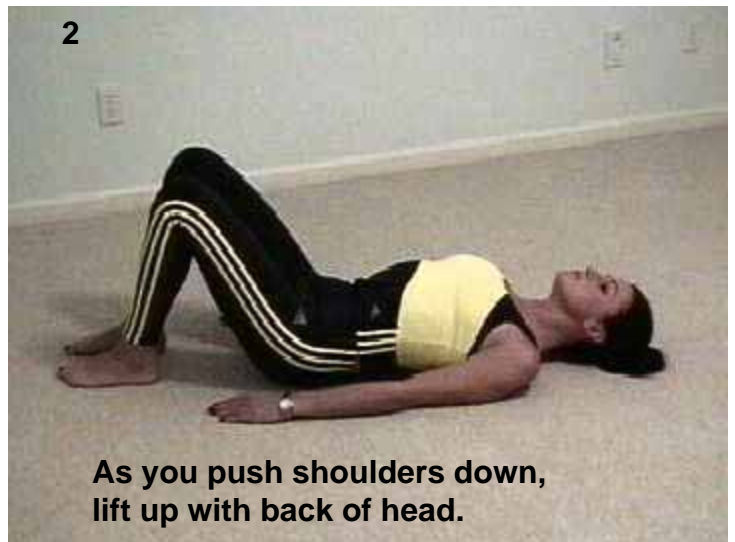


Standing straight, tighten your entire stomach pulling in and up, not crunching down. Hold for 5-10 seconds.

Relax by pushing out your stomach, holding for 5 seconds.

Repeat several times until you feel fatigued.

# #9 Back Flattening



Lie on the floor with your arms at your sides, knees bent to keep your lower back on the floor, and your head on the floor as level as possible.

Push your shoulders to the floor at the same time you reach up as far as possible with the back of your head.

Hold for 5-10 seconds.

Relax for 5 seconds.

Repeat stretch 3-5 more times.

# #10 Sit and Reach

**Sit Up  
Straight**



**Grasp Ankles**



**Pull  
Chest  
Toward  
Legs**



While on the floor, sit up as straight as possible with your legs straight in front, feet about 3-6 inches apart, knees on the floor and feet pointing straight up.

While keeping your knees down, and looking straight ahead, grab your ankles, as far down as possible.

Pull your chest toward your legs with your arms and stomach muscles for 10-15 seconds. You want to feel the stretch in the legs and back.

Now pull back against your arms for about 5 seconds. Relax. Repeat sequence 4-5 times.

# #11 Upper Spine Straightener

1



2



**Stand normally. Shrug your shoulders back and together while you push up and back with your head. Hold for 5 seconds, relax and repeat 5-10 times.**

# #12 Air Rowing & Cross Chest Arm Pull



Stand with head up and shoulders down.

Extend your arms out in front with your elbows bent 90 degrees.

Take a deep breath and slowly try to extend your elbows toward the back as far as possible, while keeping the arms level with the floor.

Hold for 3-5 seconds. You should feel this between your shoulder blades. Relax, shake out and repeat 3-5 times.

End the exercise with the cross chest arm pull.